

Quick Strokes

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New landmark discussion on the rational and irrational in keyboard character arrangement

From Prof. Hisao Yamada, of the Faculty of Science of the University of Tokyo, **Quick Strokes** has received a small supply of reprints of his article, "A Historical Study of Typewriters and Typing Methods: from the Position of Planning Japanese Parallels," from the *Journal of Information Processing* for February, 1980.

From Prof. Leonard J. West, of Baruch College of the City University of New York, one reprint drew the following quick comment:

"The arrival of the Yamada article demands that I take a break from book revision to tell you how grateful I am for the reprint. It's been a very long time since I've read anything with so unbeatable a combination of scholarship and charm. The scholars so often write ponderously, and the charmers often spout foolishness. The article's not too English English and the not very careful galley proofing are parts of its charm.

"Yamada comes across as a very nice man, indeed, and a thoughtful one to boot. The article has personality, and that's a great rarity. More to the point, although I know a pretty fair amount of its information from earlier reading over years, quite a bit was news to me and provided information I shall find most useful indeed."

JIP is the organ of the Information Processing Society of Japan. Citations from Japanese sources are given both in the Japanese characters and in English translation. German and English sources are cited in German and English, respectively.

Japanese innovators have had a tough struggle with entrenched tradition there, and Professor Yamada commiserates with the users of keyboarded equipment for the American market, stuck forever, he supposes, with a cumbersome arrangement of the characters on alphanumeric keyboards.

The difference is that Japanese traditions, good or evil, date from time immemorial. Qwerty typing, on the other hand, is still an innovation that has never, in reality, caught on. Witness the great numbers of forms — work orders, citations, applications, reports — that are filled out every day either in longhand or in more or less painstaking hand lettering.

Qwerty offers no promise as a tool subject, one that is useful in learning other subjects. The path to competence is too long and too steep. With only the elementary-school years and possibly only two or three high-school years to impart the academic subjects, schools prefer to concentrate on those.

The page numbering in the reprint is from 175 to 202, as it is in JIP, Vol. 2, No. 4.

The section on Early History recalls works by Bliven

See PAGE TWO

Notes from down under and up over

Ronald Watson, of Newport Beach, New South Wales, seeking to promote a series of typing contests leading to a world-scale final in late 1981, has received a favorable reply from one manufacturer in England and a telephoned pledge from a firm in Australia to "put money into the contest."

The Australian federal government, declining to follow that suit, is willing, however, to assist in other ways, Watson reports.

The Dvorak chip for the dual-keyboard Olivetti typewriter was due to arrive in Australia in mid-September, and Watson is confident that applications for the shipment will be found.

* * *

The English innovator is Stephen W. Hobday, of P. C. D. — Maltron Ltd., of Farnborough, Hampshire. The PCD product is an attachment for other makers' keyboarded devices. With it, it is key selection on the driven board that is electronic, rather than character selection from a font.

The PCD literature does not mention any star performers on their ergonomic keyboard, but with Lillian Malt as trainer, who knows what might develop?

Watson is gaining experience as a trainer also. Both the Office of Innovation in NSW and the Qantas airlines are counting on him to direct their retraining on word-processing units which will be laid out in an arrangement that is almost identical to the Oregon Alternate as shown in the ad on page 3 of this issue of **Quick Strokes**.

Versatile new IBM product is announced

A Dvorak arrangement on the keyboard is, we have been assured, one of the options on the IBM Displaywriter, announced in June, 1980. The salesman's manual for it, numbered G544-0851-0, makes no mention of this feature.

The keyboard, however, is a module, attached by a cable to the electronics module. A few extras on hand would take care of any casually hired operators who bring qwerty skill only.

The Displaywriter can be adapted for either word processing or telecommunication and has the interesting feature of a stored dictionary which is searched for each word and signals any that is not listed.

Continued from PAGE ONE

and Beeching, cited in the references. Quotations from the years 1895 and 1920 state the disadvantages of sight hunting, which, the author notes, "is precisely what Japanese typists are doing on the Wabun typewriter even today."

Three-rank diagrams of arrangements of characters by Blickensderfer, Nelson, Hoke, and Dvorak are presented, and an admirable discussion of the history and recent status of the Dvorak arrangement follows.

Yamada has examined all the reports of experimental applications in the United States that Quick Strokes has any track of and points up the deficiencies of some and the excellence of others. Two reports by the Australian Post Office (1953) are compared.

Starting with Frederick Winslow Taylor, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, and Henry Ford, Yamada surveys relevant scholarly works all the way to Bradley J. Lessley's thesis of 1978, and some of the popularizations are also cited. R. S. Parkinson's graphic presentation of the reduction in awkward sequences appears on page 186.

Yamada's schedule did not permit a visit to the state of Oregon; nevertheless, the article provides an adequate survey of practical applications there and of training opportunities in Oregon, Washington, and California.

The extensive list of references will be a valuable aid to scholars, and indeed, Yamada promises a sequel of his own.

JIP is quarterly, at \$35 a year. Libraries can subscribe through EBSCO, in El Segundo, California, or Japan Publications Trading Co., Ltd., P.O. Box 5030, Tokyo International, Tokyo, Japan. The latter would be the best address for enquiries about the reprints.

While the Quick Strokes supply of these lasts, copies will go, first come, first served, to subscribers who are paid up for Vol. VIII and have remitted one dollar for postage and handling.

Sir James sings praises for Lenora White

In a letter to Quick Strokes, Sir James Pitman, K.B.E., exults over our report of Lenora White's proficiency on two different arrangements of characters on keyboards. See QS 25, page 3.

He compares her performance to that of his daughter, who writes on a qwerty keyboard and also on one that is laid out in the initial teaching alphabet.

Sir James points out that his daughter's experience confirms Lenora's and disproves the criticism of those opponents of Dvorak who allege a damaging incompatibility between the two skills.

We think that if Lenora operates at a computer console, the computer might as well be programmed for Dvorak input. A competent programmer can do it without disturbing the qwerty program.

For Lenora, it doesn't make enough difference to be worth the approach to management. She simply doesn't try to set records on qwerty, and why should she? Nobody else does, either.

Sir James is director of the i.t.a. Foundation, spelled in lower case because the initial teaching alphabet is all lower-case letters. The eight keys in the upper row were assigned no longer to the figures 2 to 9. Some of the other nonalpha keys were assigned to i.t.a. characters, so that all 20 characters needed to permit every sound in English to have its unique symbol were changed.

The whole-word recognition method is out of favor among educational theorists, and sounding out is indeed baffling to beginners when the character set is limited to the 26 letters of English TO (traditional orthography). Hence, the i.t.a. Foundation, which Sir James heads, advocates the use, initially, of an adequate alphabet, which does represent each sound of spoken English by a separate symbol.

It gives the primary-school pupil the satisfaction of reading and writing passages of connected discourse much sooner than is

possible in TO. The transition to TO, which must eventually be made, is easy.

The address of the i.t.a. Foundation is 19 W. 43rd St., New York, NY 10001 or in care of James Pitman, 58 Chelsea Park Gardens, London SW3 6AE, England.

The most frequent characters in i.t.a. are the same as in TO, namely, a, s, o, n, e, t, u, h, i, and d. Typewriters are available with the lower case shift condition laid out in Dvorak fashion and the i.t.a. pairing preserved. For a sight-hunting primary pupil, this arrangement can be recommended, simply because the hunting is better.

New England Dvorak Federation goes into action again

By VIRGINIA RUSSELL

Lou Rosenblum, Dick Land, and I had a good meet at Pine Manor College in June. About twenty secretaries, department heads, and administrators heard us expound about the keyboard. There seemed to be a lot of interest. We heard many interesting questions, many intelligent ones.

At first they were rather skeptical, but as the panel discussion progressed we noticed a rise in interest which pleased us no end. We had a pile of Dvorak propaganda on the table, and as the discussion progressed hands began to reach out.

(Rosenblum is director of the Graphic Arts Research Foundation, Land is on the staff of the Harvard University Engineering Research Laboratory, and Mrs. Russell is vice-president of the Dvorak International Federation, eastern address 11 Pearl St., Brandon VT 05733, western address P.O. Box 73, Portland, Oregon 97207.—Edit note.)

An article to watch for

A forthcoming issue of 80-Microcomputing magazine — look for it in October or November, 1980, on newsstands — will contain an article by Waldo Boyd and Jon Etherton on conversion of the TRS 80 keyboard to a Dvorak arrangement. In it, says Etherton, "I give away all of my technical secrets."

The publisher's address is Pine St., Peterboro, New Hampshire 03458.

Parkinson still incapacitated

Robert S. Parkinson, known to many readers as an early and eloquent advocate of the rational, Dvorak, arrangement for characters on keyboards, has been in the hospital again and in severe pain.

To keep your Quick Strokes coming

Subscriptions to Quick Strokes are \$5 per yearly volume, \$5.30 in California. A double subscription—two copies of each issue, both to one address or each to a separate address, is \$7.50, in California \$7.95. Query us at Box 643, West Sacramento, CA 95691, about prices for regular orders for bundles of 20 or multiples. Subscriptions expire with the Winter — March — issue of each year.

Right address for SAM 76, Inc.

Ever faithful Steve Johnston, of Spokane, has supplied the right address for the firm that offers a ready-made program for converting a TRS-80 home computer to a Dvorak arrangement on the keyboard. It is SAM 76, Inc., Box 257, Rural Route 1, Pennington, NJ 08534. The manager is Ancelme Roichel. Their literature mentions Claude Kagan as a consultant. Kagan is senior engineer at Western Electric Engineering Research Center, located between Pennington and Princeton.

Source and scene Californian

"There was a night school class of about 50 students at the local City College. All seats were filled with Qwerty tappers. Only about 17 finished the semester. At least three of them with nearly perfect attendance did not get a grade. They could not learn it."

Our source remarks that people drop out for many reasons. Nevertheless, when a student can see that he is getting somewhere he is more inclined to persevere, as our student on Dvorak did. The account reflects the extreme difficulty of the traditional arrangement.

Students assume that the keyboard "must have" been laid out for easy learning and accurate input. When they find out it is difficult, they convict themselves of ineptitude and drop out.

Qwerty is, indeed, easy and accurate in comparison with the alphabetic arrangement which C. L. Sholes apparently started with. That arrangement impels the student to depend on his visual memory instead of on his kinaesthetic memory, which is what counts.

Qwerty is, nonetheless, a beast to learn and a monster to operate. Failure at it says nothing at all about prospects of success at the rational, Dvorak, arrangement.

Thousands of consoles, terminals, and typewriters that can be converted to the better arrangement without heat or solder are already in the field. The new generation of keyboarded devices, where character selection is electronic, is convertible without a special font—segment, ball, wheel, or cylinder.

The right time to switch a student, if the Dvorak is not the first arrangement offered, is before the dropout point or before the washout point. If the time that is saved in training is devoted to vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and style, the smart employer will equip to match the applicant's skill.

DVORAK CONVERSION program for Radio Shack TRS-80 Level II Microsoft Basic. Relocatable program runs in 183 bytes memory. Program tape and Basic listing \$10. Information \$2. Jon Etherton, 1927 W. Riverside, Spokane, WA 99201. (509) 624-8474.

FOR RENT—One-inch videotape, "Typewriters: Dvorak Made a Better One", narrated by Albert C. Kolb, Carmel (California) Middle School, time 14 minutes and 19 seconds. Narrator and secretary demonstrate an interesting and innovative alternative to the standard keyboard. Motivates student interest in the typewriter and in developing skills. Per week, \$5. Quick Strokes, Box 643, West Sacramento, CA 95691.

Vermont newspapers cover Watson visit

Burlington Free Press, June 12, 1980, diagrams, Watson portrait photo, "Dvorak Keyboard Gives Typists Incredible Speed," interview with Ronald Watson, Australian expert on typing training and equipment, by Maggie Maurice.

The Valley Voice, May 27, 1980, page 13, interview with Watson, photo shows Watson seated on a park bench talking to Virginia Russell and wearing an "I type Dvorak" lapel button. Head reads, "QWERTYUIOP — This is what the typewriter says, but it doesn't have to." Buttons available from DIF — see the editorial note to the New England story in Quick Strokes, page 2, this issue.

Alternate keyboard standard draft is delayed once again

The draft proposed standard arrangement for "Dvoraklike" keyboards that was circulated to members of the DSK working group of American National Standards Committee X4 (office machines and supplies), in May, 1980, has been withdrawn. A revised draft is in preparation.

Another subcommittee of X4, known as X4A12, has elaborated a new standard arrangement, this one "qwertylike", to replace the X4.7 and X4.14 standards, which have been withdrawn by the parent committee. The scopes of the two subcommittees are separate, and each has instructions to avoid consideration of arrangements that fall within the other's scope.

The two sets of standard arrangements, in both cases for four somewhat divergent sets of characters and on arrays of 44 and 48 keys, will appear in the same document, and qwerty will remain as the standard, with the Dvorak diagrams designated as alternate to it. If they were bound separately, each would be in conflict with the other.

Letter

Ben has asked me to thank you for sending him a copy of your letter to Mr. Kolb, and for the note you added to that copy.

He is much interested in Mr. Kolb's proposal and hopes he will be successful in obtaining the grant he is requesting.

I am enclosing the \$5 subscription fee for Quick Strokes, together with our best wishes to you and our congratulations on the continuing success of your pioneering leadership.

Sincerely yours,
GRACE T. WOOD

"THE DVORAK SIMPLIFIED KEYBOARD: 40 Years of Frustration": 8-page, stapled author's reprint of *Computers and Automation* article. Written after invitation by Ralph Nader to speak on DSK. Very interesting text and illustrations. \$2 p pd. Bob Parkinson, 664 Gail Avenue, B-22, Sunnyvale, CA 97086.

ASK SCM's—some in stock can ship pronto. 10% discount for cash with order only. ASK US for info. Belmont Adams, 4 Park Ave., Scarborough, ME 04074.

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